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Budget motion to strengthen local control over bike lanes

MADISON, Wis. – The Joint Finance Committee today approved a budget motion request submitted by state Rep. Joe Sanfelippo, R-New Berlin, that gives local governments complete control over bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure being installed in their communities.

Sanfelippo's plan builds upon Gov. Scott Walker's proposal to repeal the state provision of the Complete Streets law, which requires, with rare exception, the creation of bicycle lanes or pedestrian paths in all highway construction and reconstruction projects that receive state or federal funding.

Gov. Walker is aiming to reduce state mandates while continuing to give due consideration to adding bike lanes or pedestrian amenities in every state highway project, as required by federal law.

Under Sanfelippo's budget motion, the state Department of Transportation will only be able to establish bicycle lanes or walkways as part of a highway project if the affected local governments adopt a resolution authorizing the infrastructure.

"We are putting these decisions into the hands of local government units because they are the ones who know their areas the best," Sanfelippo said. "This by no means will result in the end of bike paths. We just want to add in some common sense to make sure we're not wasting millions in taxpayer dollars on bike lanes or pedestrian paths that are unneeded or barely used."

One such example is the DOT recently spending nearly \$3.6 million to reconstruct the Dakota Street Pedestrian Bridge off Interstate 894 in West Allis. The structure is less than two blocks away from the Cleveland Street Bridge, which has sidewalks for pedestrians.

Repealing the state provision of the Complete Streets law is projected to save taxpayers \$7.4 million over the next biennium, according to budget documents. A Wisconsin Legislative Council memo also says the state should not lose any federal transportation funding by changing the law or adopting Sanfelippo's budget motion

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